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Web eases gun permit process

People who've applied for concealed weapons permits now can check status on Internet.

Charles E. Ramirez / The Detroit News

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MOUNT CLEMENS-- The Macomb County clerk's office has launched a service that allows residents to use the Internet to check the status of their applications for concealed weapons permits and frees up staff to help residents with other issues.

"We could get as many as 30 calls a day about (concealed weapons) applications, and it would really bog down my staff," said Carmella Sabaugh, the county clerk.

She thinks the service is the first of its kind in Michigan.

Michigan State Police officials said they had not heard of such a program anywhere else in the state.

The program, which was introduced through Sabaugh's office, is designed to eliminate confusion for applicants, Sabaugh said.

"We thought, 'Wouldn't be great if we could make this information available online and allow us to spend less time on status calls and more time helping others?'"

"We've wanted to make this service available for some time," she said.

The county clerk's office introduced the online status check for applications earlier this month.

Kenneth Melchoir, 56, of Fraser said he likes the new service. He learned about the service recently, when he visited the clerk's office to renew his permit.

"I'm not very computer literate, but it was very easy to use and straightforward," the civil engineer said.

"It was really interesting to check on the status of my application and see how it progressed."

Under state law, residents must have a license to carry a concealed weapon.

To obtain licenses, owners must submit applications for their permits with county clerks.

The process can take as long as three months.

With the new service, applicants are given a Web site address, a user name and a password that enables them to log on and check the status of their applications.

Sabaugh said the service is working well and the number of calls from applicants has noticeably decreased.

For the first 11 months of 2005, 4,217 Macomb County residents applied for concealed weapons permits, and 4,159 have been issued by the county's Concealed Weapon Licensing Board, according to the county clerk's office.

The board is made up of Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith, Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel and Michigan State Police Lt. Robert York.

Last year, 3,395 Macomb County residents applied for concealed weapon permits, and the county's weapon licensing board granted 3,341 permits, according to Sabaugh's office.